

Prepared Testimony respectfully submitted to the Transportation Committee
11 March, 2009

RE: SB 735 - "An Act Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Access"

Honorable Senator DeFronzo, Honorable Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee, I write in strong support of the CT statewide "Complete Streets" legislation (SB 735).

My name is Rob Rocke. I have been a resident of New Haven's East Rock neighborhood for almost fifteen years. I am an alumnus of the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and currently work for Yale University's Information Technology department. I do not drive to work, but rather commute to work either by biking or walking. My job responsibilities also necessitate that I travel to many different locations around Yale's campus on a daily basis: this, too, I do by foot and bicycle. I am therefore particularly sensitive to the public safety concerns of unsafe streets. Those experiences led me to join New Haven's Elm City Cycling, one of the first bicycling/pedestrian advocacy groups in town, and I have now been an active member of that group for many years. In fact, I currently sit on the newly appointed board of Elm City Cycling.

What you notice when you spend a lot of time walking and biking in New Haven is that our streets have become like the proverbial "Wild West". It seems like during every commute, if not at nearly every block or every intersection, you encounter countless incidents of motor vehicle drivers driving carelessly and irresponsibly, if not aggressively and downright illegally: they're talking on the phone, texting, reading (yes, reading!), speeding, running red lights and stop signs, and disobeying the basic rules of the road which mandate that they yield the right of way to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Clearly, this problem is not unique to New Haven. In fact, I see it all the time on Connecticut's state and county highways, as well as in other CT towns and communities. Take just a few miles trip on I-91 or I-95 out of New Haven with sensitivity to traffic safety concerns and you will be appalled: speed racing in and out of traffic, ubiquitous passing on the right without signaling, and a total disregard for the basic decencies of the road. (And sadly, you almost never see a State Police cruiser anymore enforcing these fundamental rules of the road.)

So although this problem is not unique to New Haven, New Haven has at last been galvanized to the point of **doing** something about it. Through the leadership of local Alders such as Erin Sturgis-Pascale and Roland Lemar, in tandem with the efforts of local advocacy groups such as Elm City Cycling, New Haven successfully passed a citywide "Complete Streets" initiative last fall, and we're beginning to see signs of change in New Haven: the New Haven Police Department has unveiled their Traffic Safety Hotline, experts in the field of livable, multi-use streets have come to New Haven and given us constructive, real-world feedback, and we've begun piloting the use of in-street pedestrian crosswalk signs.

These are some specific, positive steps that many of us worked long and hard for, but what is needed are not one-off solutions to single problems, but rather a comprehensive,

statewide plan to guarantee that pedestrian and bicyclist rights are considered at every level of transportation planning. With that in mind, the statewide "Complete Streets" legislation (SB 735) couldn't be coming at a more crucial time. Such legislation will have the immediate goal of making our streets safer, with fewer accidents, and yes, fewer fatalities. But more than that, it will be a boon to the overall quality of life in our state by fostering a greater sense of community everywhere, no matter how you get around our cities and towns: folks on bikes, on foot, taking the bus, or even driving their cars to work and school interacting in a safe, vibrant environment that welcomes them all.

I would like to offer my **enthusiastic** support for this statewide "Complete Streets" bill (SB 735). Thank you.